

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-4 and 7-9 were presented for examination. The Examiner rejected claims 1 and 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,748,020, issue to Eifrig et al. (hereafter "Eifrig") and claims 4 and 7-9 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Eifrig.

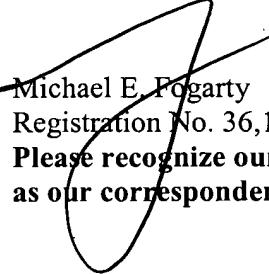
The Applicants respectfully point out that Eifrig does not constitute prior to the instant application. The instant application is a PCT international patent application and its priority or international filing date is September 8, 2000. Eifrig's priority date is October 25, 2000. Therefore, the instant application predates Eifrig. As such, all pending rejections must be withdrawn.

Accordingly, it is believed that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance. Applicant therefore respectfully requests an early and favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application. If there are any outstanding issues which might be resolved by an interview or an Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is invited to call Applicant's representative at the telephone number shown below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: October 3, 2006